



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

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Savannah River Site Reaches Significant Milestone with Waste Tank Closure

AIKEN, S.C. – The Savannah River Site (SRS) achieved a significant milestone this week with the operational closure of tanks 18 and 19, meeting a federal agreement before the December 31, 2012, deadline.

Savannah River Remediation, the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) contractor that has the responsibility to close waste tanks, completed the operational closure of tanks 18 and 19 months ahead of the deadline by completing the grouting of the two tanks. The end of the projects meets a requirement of the Federal Facility Agreement or FFA between DOE, the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (SCDHEC) and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

The last tanks closed at SRS – which were also the first in the nation – were in 1997 with Tanks 17 and 20, lying adjacent to Tanks 18 and 19. Since then, nine other DOE waste tanks were closed in Idaho in 2009.

With as much grout to fill nearly four Olympic-sized swimming pools, Tanks 18 and 19 have been stabilized to complete the operational closure, opening a new chapter for the Site's future, according to Dr. David Moody, DOE-Savannah River Manager. "Completing this closure project is critical to meeting our mission. It is a significant step toward the country's efforts to safely manage legacy waste from the Cold War."

The South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (SCDHEC) Director Catherine Templeton said that the waste in the million-gallon tanks at SRS represents the single greatest environmental risk in South Carolina, and closing the tanks is a top priority for her organization.

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“The staff at the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control have worked diligently to see that these waste tanks can be safely closed,” Ms. Templeton said. “We will continue to work with DOE and contractors to assure our state’s citizens are protected.”

Robert Pope, Environmental Protection Agency Region IV Federal Facilities Agreement Manager, said the clean-up of legacy waste at SRS confirms this type of work can be performed safely and effectively.

“EPA believes the closure of these tanks demonstrates that the cleanup work at SRS is headed in the right direction when it comes to protecting human health and the environment,” Mr. Pope said. “We are pleased with this process and its results.”

Dave Olson, Savannah River Remediation President and Project Manager, said he is proud that SRR has been able to operationally close old-style nuclear waste tanks, or those without full secondary containment systems, in just over three years into their six-year contract.

“SRR has done the job safely and efficiently while meeting stakeholder expectations,” said Olson. “While we have reached many milestones, operational tank closure is how we ultimately document success for our DOE customer and surrounding communities.”

Tanks 18 and 19 are two of the 51 underground carbon-steel waste storage tanks that make up the waste management facility at SRS, built at President Harry Truman’s request for a new national defense project near the beginning of the Cold War as part of the nuclear weapons production process. About 37 million gallons of highly radioactive liquid waste remain in 47 waste tanks, since four tanks are now closed. SRR’s mission is to safely and efficiently reduce risk by dispositioning the waste and stabilizing the tanks.

There are 24 old-style tanks, and 15 of them are in the tank closure process. Closing the tanks involves removing the waste from the tanks and stabilizing them with formulated grout-like cement.

SRR will host an event for employees, elected officials and stakeholders on October 1 to celebrate the achievement.

The Savannah River Site is owned by DOE. The SRS Liquid Waste contract is managed by SRR, a team of companies led by URS Corp. with partners Bechtel National, CH2M Hill and Babcock & Wilcox. Critical subcontractors for the contract include; AREVA, Energy Solutions and URS Safety Management Solutions.

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